



**TRANSFERS, TOP UPS  
and  
RECOGNITION OF PRIOR  
CERTIFICATED LEARNING  
and/or PRIOR EXPERIENTIAL  
LEARNING (RPcL & RPeL) POLICY  
(Including Student Exchange Processes for  
Credits)**



Birmingham  
Newman  
University



## CONTENT

	Page
<b>1. Introduction</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>2. Credits</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>3. Credit Rating</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>4. CCRS Credits</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>5. Summary of the RPcL Processes</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>6. RPeL Processes</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>7. Applying to Study with Prior Learning</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>8. Transfers from Other Higher Education Institution (HEI) to Newman University</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>9. Top Up Study at Newman University</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>10. Feedback</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>11. Appeals and Complaints</b>	<b>12</b>



## 1. INTRODUCTION

Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) grew out of a move to recognise the quality of learning undertaken in a range of contexts and was developed as a result of the debate about awarding credit for learning. There are two main routes to claiming accreditation:

1. Recognition of prior accredited learning, known as **RPcL**;
2. Recognition of prior experiential learning, known as **RPeL**.

Accumulating credits through the recognition of prior learning is not an easy option. It requires applicants to be just as thorough and rigorous in putting together the evidence of that learning as they would be in preparing a formal assessment item. What is meant by 'credit' is outlined below.

The process of applying for recognition requires applicants to reflect on their own learning and to identify how far they have developed knowledge and understanding in a general or specific HE module. The result for many students can be to improve confidence in their own abilities and enable them to have a clearer understanding of their own capability, as well as providing the necessary documentation to apply for accreditation of prior learning.

### **General principles of good practice to assure quality and standards in the RPcL and RPeL process.**

The purpose of RPcL/RPeL is to take account of the diversity of prior learning experiences possessed by potential students, whilst requiring adherence to the basic principles necessary to secure quality and standards. Consequently,

- ❖ the policies and procedures for making an RPcL/RPeL claim must be explicit, fair and applied consistently;
- ❖ the University will exercise properly its responsibility to maintain the academic standards of its awards where RPcL/RPeL is permissible;
- ❖ the information about the process for recognition given to RPcL/RPeL applicants and staff must be clear and defined;
- ❖ the decisions regarding the recognition of prior accredited and experiential learning are a matter of academic judgement;
- ❖ staff involved in the RPcL/RPeL processes must be competent to undertake their responsibilities.

## 2. CREDITS

Most institutions of Higher Education in Britain have adopted an agreed approach to giving value to each unit or module on their programmes. This is known as the Credit Accumulation and Transfer Scheme (CATS). Each unit of learning, or module, is allocated a value, or number of credits, and a level, which indicates the degree of challenge of the module.



To gain a degree award, students normally have to accumulate 360 credits (or 480 on a four-year programme); a Diploma represents 240 credits and a Certificate 120. Level 4 credits normally equate to the first year of a full-time programme in HE, Level 5 to the second year and Level 6 to Honours level. The level of credits reflects the level of challenge for the learner, the range of knowledge expected and the outcomes required.

Qualification	Maximum of CATS credits that can be RPcL/RPeL-ed
Foundation Degree	120 CATS credits at Level 4
Bachelor of Arts (BA) or Bachelor of Science (BSc) Honours Degree	120 CATS credits at Level 4 and 120 CATS credits at Level 5
Master of Arts or Master in Science (MA/MSc)	90 CATS credits at Level 7 (M) excluding the dissertation
Post Graduate Diploma	60 CATS credits at Level 7 (M) excluding any major project
Post Graduate Certificate	30 CATS credits at Level 7 (M)
CCRS	18 CATS credits *

Provided that it is clear that individual applicants have fulfilled some of the progression and assessment requirements of the programmes of study concerned by means other than attendance on the programme, and that they will be able, by completing the remaining requirements, to fulfil the outcomes of the programmes and attain the standards required for particular awards, such applicants may be admitted as students to any approved appropriate point(s) in the programme(s) concerned subject to any over-riding requirements of the General Academic Regulations, and approval through the RPL and Transfer process.

Due rigour is exercised in complying with the requirements relating to the standards of particular awards. Any decision on the recognition of prior learning will be an academic judgement about the equivalence of the learning derived from experience and the learning that might otherwise have been assessed during the course or programme, or evidenced by a qualification or other form of certificated learning recognised in the University entry requirements.

Considering the equivalence of learning achieved by an applicant, a combination of skills and learning outcomes, level and relevance of the subject knowledge and understanding need to be evidenced:

- Combination of skills and learning outcomes:** that there is sufficient overlap between learning outcomes, the indicative content is similar and where appropriate, the assessment is similar.
- Level:** the evidence being presented should be appropriate to the level to which the RPcL/RPeL request is being mapped.



- c) **Credits:** this should be awarded in specified amounts, at an identified level, normally in amounts which conform to the University's curriculum framework i.e. in modular chunks. Consideration may need to be given to the mandatory structure of the degree to determine whether to apply general or specific credits i.e. if a particular module is required to be included in the degree classification, it may be preferred to have specific credits, to enable the degree classification calculation to be accurate.
- d) **Relevance of the subject knowledge and understanding to be evidenced by applicants for RPcL:** the evidence to be provided can vary but will normally include:
- ❖ original transcripts or authorised copies;
  - ❖ a copy of the award certificate
  - ❖ for overseas qualifications refer to UK NARIC – National Recognition Information Centre for the United Kingdom – <http://www.naric.org.uk/> which also describes levels and equivalence;
  - ❖ for levels of examinations/qualifications awarded through Professional bodies refer to the Ofqual database.

In addition the following evidence may sometimes be required:

- ❖ module descriptors or equivalent;
- ❖ outline of the programme (if appropriate);
- ❖ level of intellectual challenge;
- ❖ assignments completed for the course with marks awarded and tutor's comments (only in exceptional circumstances).

**NOTE: The normal shelf life of Credits is 5 years.** Where credits have been achieved more than 5 years prior to the application for RPcL, it would be the decision of the relevant Programme Leader or Head of Department to consider the up-to-dateness and relevance of these credits and to make a recommendation to the RPL Chair to accept these credits. Applicants would be required to provide a copy of their CV, including details of any recent and relevant work based training, in order to support their RPcL application for credits older than 5 years.

- e) **The nature of experiential learning may require that a variety of assessment tools be used to evidence learning, for example:**
- ❖ portfolios of evidence – and the nature and volume of evidence required;
  - ❖ completion of a piece of work and a reflective account/diary of the learning achieved,
  - ❖ open interview or viva relating to work submitted under either of the above points
  - ❖ completion of the usual assessment used to demonstrate learning in the module/course/programme for which equivalence is being claimed.



- f) The requirements of **professional and regulatory bodies** will need to be considered where appropriate. It should be noted that if a module is granted by RPcL, some professional bodies may not permit that module to count towards professional accreditation.

Any decision by the University to admit students to a course with RPcL or RPeL will take into account:

- ❖ any impact on course fees, which would not necessarily be reduced in proportion to the credits exempted;
- ❖ whether or not such a decision would affect a student's status as a full time or part time student, which could impact on their funding status (for Home students)
- ❖ SLC funding, loans or bursary implications
- ❖ targets and course numbers, where applicable;
- ❖ the likelihood of the student successfully completing their award with performance comparable to current students;
- ❖ any existing agreements with partner institutions to recognise their qualifications to guarantee direct entry;
- ❖ that a significant amount of time may be needed to properly assess a student's application, particularly, for RPeL, and that an appropriate charge may be made for this assessment, which is set by the University.

### 3. CREDIT RATING

The UK credit system uses a notional equivalent expressed in terms of student effort. Therefore 1 credit is considered to represent a notional 10 hours of student effort. A full year of undergraduate study (120 credits) would equate notionally to 1,200 hours of student effort.

Credits are not given for more than two thirds of any undergraduate (Bachelors) degree course.

RPcL/RPeL can normally be given for up to 240 credits on an undergraduate (360 credit) degree; RPcL/RPeL will not be given for the final year of a programme.

For Masters Programmes, the maximum credit that can be given will be 90 Level 7 credits.

For those applicants wishing to join the final year of an honours degree, with a suitable Foundation degree award or HND or equivalent, the necessary 240 credits may be granted, subject to any conditions required by the Subject and successful completion of the bridging protocol prescribed.

Applicants wishing to join Level 5 of Foundation degrees may apply for as much as the whole of Level 4 (50% of the programme) to be recognised.



RPcL claims cannot put forward experience gained from earlier study for consideration under RPeL (recognition of prior experiential learning), as this should relate to non-award bearing courses and work experience. **Learning cannot be double counted.**

In assessing a claim for RPcL, the content and level of earlier accredited learning must be analysed. Applicants are required to produce any certificates awarded, together with transcripts of individual results. Certificates of attendance will not be accepted as evidence.

The following professional qualifications/other qualifications are also accepted by the University for RPcL:

- i. For the BA Top Up Degree in Counselling, those applicants holding suitable professional Diplomas and demonstrating that they have met the learning outcomes relevant to the BA Counselling Top Up degree;
- ii. For the BA Top Up Degree in Youth and Community Work, those applicants holding suitable professional diplomas or other professional awards as defined by the national Youth Work Council (JNC), and demonstrating that they have met the learning outcomes relevant to level 5 of the Youth and Community Work degree;
- iii. 30 credits at level 7 for National TLA Consortium verified 2 projects against assessed level 7 modules.

### **European Exchange Programmes**

The University, to assist with student exchange programmes, recognises and operates the European Credit Transfer Scheme (ECTS) and provides ECTS equivalence for all its modules. The agreed ECTS credit value for the UK is half the credit rating value to UK modules. (NB this should not be taken to reflect the amount of student effort required). A 20 credit UK module will therefore be worth 10 ECTS credits.

### **American Exchange Programmes**

For exchange programmes with the United States, and in line with other UK Universities, the following credit rating is used:

20 UK credits	=	5 US credits
15/16 UK credits	=	4 US credits

All credits are given at a specific level and comply with the QAA level descriptors in the framework for Higher Education Qualification and in terms of the European credits, in line with the European cycles of qualifications.

The principles and processes used for RPcL are also employed to facilitate the awarding of credit for students undertaking International exchange programmes.





The credits taken on exchange programmes can be considered under RPcL as detailed in the options below:

- i. RPcL or the total number of US/European credits undertaken against the equivalent number of credits here – this would be able to provide a general number of credits (general RPcL credit)
- ii. RPcL for the total number of credits/courses directly against the modules the student would have taken here (specific RPcL credit)
- iii. The recognition of the courses/modules being taken in Europe/the US in place of relevant modules here. This requires a common agreement of the worth of the European/US mark system against Newman's mark system.

Students studying abroad may also, subject to University agreement, complete all their

University modules and receive additional recognition for their exchange activities (outside standard academic activities) using section 6.1 of the Higher Education Achievement Record (HEAR).

#### **4. CATHOLIC CERTIFICATE OF RELIGIOUS STUDIES (CCRS) CREDITS\***

Credits may be granted for modules/units being undertaken as part of the Catholic Certificate of Religious Studies. The CCRS comprises of 8 units of 4.5 credits at Level 4, making a total of 36 credits. A maximum of four units, exemption of CCRS level 4, RPcL may be agreed (i.e. no more than half of the CCRS programme). The usual time limits of 5 years apply.

**\*Credits are for transfer purposes only. The CCRS programme does NOT award credits, but certification only.**

#### **5. SUMMARY OF RPcL PROCESSES**

On receipt of enquiries or a request to be considered for credit, the Admissions Team will provide a copy of the policy and RPcL claim form.

On receipt of the completed RPcL form and evidence, the Admissions Team will pass the documents to the relevant Programme Leader/Head of Subject with a request that they consider the application and complete the approval form. No forms will be sent to academic colleagues without all the required supporting documentation.

When the duly completed form and evidence have been viewed by the Head of Subject/Programme leader and a recommendation to accept the RPcL has been made, the head of Subject/Programem leader will then pass the forma and evidence to the appropriate Associate Dean for formal approval.

No RPeL will be fully agreed without the signature of the Associate Dean.





In assessing a claim for RPcL, the content and level of earlier accredited learning must be analysed. If a student has already been awarded credit on an accredited CATS programme, he or she will normally have to produce any certificates which were awarded (which should state the name and level of the award) together with a breakdown of the content of the modules taken as evidence of the level of study on the previous award (formal transcript).

**NOTE: Certificates of Attendance do not count as evidence and transcripts provided must be originals.**

If a transcript/certificate indicates that some or all of the award has included work accredited under RPcL or RPeL processes, such work may not be considered for the new claim (double recognition).

Where appropriate, further information will be required from the relevant Programme Leader/Head of Subject making a case for exceptional acceptance of credits where the credits to be approved are more than 5 years old.

Once the decision has been confirmed, the applicant will be informed in writing and copies of the relevant documentation kept on the applicant's file.

**NOTE: Programme Leaders and Heads of Subject cannot give assurances to applicants that they will be awarded RPcL.**

**Applications for RPcL should be made in a timely manner so that decisions regarding their application can be made prior to the start of the course to which the applicant is seeking entry. An applicant seeking RPcL will not be able to enrol with advanced standing until the RPcL has been agreed by the Associate Dean.**

## **6. RPeL PROCESSES**

**RPeL (prior experiential learning) is learning which has not been formally assessed.**

In making a claim for credit against such learning, the applicant is required to produce evidence that they have made progress in their knowledge, skills and understanding which is equivalent to that gained on a formal programme. In order to do this, applicants will require full details of the modules/programmes against which they are making the claim. The applicant will need specifically to demonstrate how their experience provides a match to the learning outcomes of the modules/level for which they are making a claim.

A claim for prior experiential learning has to include evidence of learning which is comparable to the national standards set out in the subject benchmarks and Framework for Higher Education Qualification from the Quality Assurance Agency. This is in the interest of the student because it ensures that the award which contains an element of RPeL has equivalent standing with other awards and represents a high quality learning experience.



### **6.1 Preparation of a Portfolio/electronic Portfolio/ presentation or professional Dialogue for evidence for RPeL**

A portfolio or a presentation for an RPeL claim should contain the evidence which is to be submitted in support of a claim. The portfolio/presentation should demonstrate that earlier learning through experience has enabled the applicant to develop the knowledge, skills and understanding that are equivalent to the learning outcomes of modules on the new award for the applicant to work towards. The evidence must be:

- ❖ **substantial;**
- ❖ **relevant;**
- ❖ **authentic;**
- ❖ **current;**
- ❖ **supported by others;**
- ❖ **acceptable.**

Most of the evidence which is brought forward from experiential learning is practical. In order to support a claim that this practical work has enabled the applicant to develop transferable skills, the applicant will need to demonstrate that they have developed an understanding of the theory behind the learning and also appropriate skills in academic writing. This can be demonstrated in a number of ways. The applicant can write an analysis of their learning; they can refer to books or articles which show that learning occurs in similar situations or they can be formally interviewed on their portfolio, provide a presentation or take part in a professional dialogue.

### **6.2 Portfolio Content**

- ❖ Cover sheet with the applicant's name, the title of the award they are working towards and the date of submission of the portfolio;
- ❖ Table of contents;
- ❖ Statement of claim;
- ❖ Personal profile or full Curriculum Vitae;
- ❖ Cross-referencing form;
- ❖ The evidence itself, carefully organised and labelled;
- ❖ A statement in which the applicant relates the evidence to the learning outcomes of the modules they wish to be awarded credits.

The final decision regarding the RPeL approval is made, following the recommendation of the Head of Subject/Programme Leader by the appropriate Associate Dean.

Where an application for RPeL is refused on academic grounds, an appeal will not normally be permitted. However, feedback on the reasons for the refusal should be provided to applicants.

### **6.3 RPeL Fees**



A fee is charged towards the RPcL process. The fee must be paid when the portfolio is submitted. The fees that may be charged vary between £250 and £1000 depending on the number and level of CATS requested.

<b>Number &amp; Level of Credits</b>	<b>Fee Charged</b>
20 to 40 CATS Level 4 or 5	£250
60 to 80 CATS Level 4 or 5	£500
100 to 120 CATS Level 4 or 5	£750
140 to 240 CATS Level 4 and 5	£1000
10 to 30 CATS Level 7 (M)	£250
40 to 60 CATS Level 7 (M)	£500
70 to 90 CATS Level 7 (M)	£750

## **7. APPLYING TO STUDY WITH PRIOR LEARNING**

Students wishing to apply or transfer to Newman University with prior learning or experiential learning must apply to the University directly or through the UCAS system.

The UCAS online application form allows for application to all the years of a course. Newman University must consider the application and request confirmation of results and/or experience in the same way as an applicant applying for a HEI place for the first time.

All applications for entry with advanced standing are considered through the RPcL/RPeL process.

The RPcL/RPeL process works within the spirit of national credit transfer agreements, but the University reserves the right to:

- ❖ Reject applications where there is an unsatisfactory or inappropriate match of content and level, and
- ❖ Charge a fee for processing RPcL/RPeL applications related to the complexity of the claim.

## **8. TRANSFERS FROM OTHER HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS (HEIs) TO NEWMAN UNIVERSITY**

Students (either part time or full time) who wish to transfer from another HEI to Newman University will need to apply through UCAS if they transfer to full time, or directly at Newman if they transfer to part time study.

If the student is transferring into an Initial Teacher Education (ITE) course, they will be called to a scheduled Interview Day and the Partnership Office must be consulted to ensure the appropriate period of school experience has been undertaken.



The student will then be expected to complete their year of study and forward a results transcript and a letter authorising release from the other institution together with a copy of their original UCAS application form. If credits from the first HEI are being counted against the new programme at Newman University, then the applicant must also apply for RPcL using the processes described in this policy.

## **9. TOP UP STUDY AT NEWMAN UNIVERSITY**

Top Up degrees are for those who have successfully completed a Higher National Diploma (HND) or Foundation Degree and want to study further and progress onto the final year of an Honours degree programme. Topping up a HND or Foundation Degree will typically take one further year of full-time study or up to two years of part-time study. The top up course will build upon the applicant's knowledge and skills from his/her previous qualification.

Entry requirements include HND/Foundation Degree or BTEC/HND in a related subject to the top up course applied for.

Students (either part time or full time) who wish to apply for a BA/BSc top up programme at Newman University will need to apply through UCAS if they intend to study full time or directly at Newman if they intend to study part time.

Applicants are not required to also apply for RPL, as their previous qualification is a requirement for entry.

If the student is applying for an Initial Teacher Education (ITE) top up course, he/she will be called to a scheduled Interview Day

Offers for Sport and Business related top ups may include successful completion of a Bridging Protocol Module at Newman University before starting the course in September. If an applicant is unable to attend or fails the Bridging Protocol Module, then they may be offered a place on Level 5 (year 2) of the course instead.

## **10. FEEDBACK**

The University is required to record reasons for admissions decisions together with any supporting information. Feedback is provided to all unsuccessful applications for RPcL/RPeL. If the applicant is unhappy with the feedback provided, they can make a further request, in writing (by email or letter), including details of the applicant's full name, date of birth, home address, UCAS Personal Identification or Newman Reference number and programme applied for.

## **11. APPEALS AND COMPLAINTS**

The University aims to consider all RPcL/RPeL applications equally, fairly and effectively in line with our procedures.



If an applicant is dissatisfied with the outcome or treatment of their application, the concerns should be raised first with the Admissions team. Where the concerns remain, the applicant is advised to use the [University Appeals and Complaints Procedures: Students Complaints \(including applicants\)](#).

Appeals must be based on one of the following criteria:

- ❖ The applicant believes that they have received discriminatory treatment compared to other applicants
- ❖ The applicant believes that the University has not adhered to its own stated procedures for the processing of RPcL/RPeL applications
- ❖ The applicant had additional information to provide to the University which was unavailable at the point of the RPcL/RPeL application. (If this information was available at the point of application but was not included on the RPcL/RPeL application form, this will not be accepted as sufficient grounds for appeal).

**Note:** Applicants have no right of appeal on academic grounds and there is no right of appeal against the professional judgement of those making a decision on an RPcL/RPeL application. Any appeals that are not based on one of the above specific criteria will be rejected.

Any applicant requesting detailed feedback or making a complaint or appeal will not be discriminated against in any further RPcL/RPeL applications on that basis.

**Last update:** March 2019, with minor amendments October 2019



Document control box	
Policy Procedure title:	<b>Transfers, Top-ups and Recognition of Prior (certified or experiential) Learning Policy (including Student Exchange Process for Credits)</b>
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Implementation Date:	
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Related Statutes, Ordinances, General Regulations	Academic Standards Office for Students Competition and Markets Authority (CMA) <a href="#">Data Protection Act 1998 &amp; 2018</a> Government and relevant statutory bodies such as the Higher Education Funding Council England Quality Assurance Agency's UK Quality Code for Higher Education Department for Education UCAS <a href="#">UK Council for International Students' Affairs (UKCISA)</a> UK NARIC <a href="#">UK Visa and Immigration (UKVI)</a>
Related Policies	<a href="#">Anti-Bribery and Corruption Policy</a> <a href="#">Data Protection Policy</a> <a href="#">Debt Management Policy</a> <a href="#">Equality and Diversity Policy</a> <a href="#">Health and Safety Policy</a> <a href="#">Public Interest Disclosure Policy</a>
Related Procedures and Guidance:	<a href="#">University Appeals and Complaints Procedures: Student complaints (including applicants)</a>
Policy Owner:	John-Paul Lahiri
Lead Contact:	Head of Admissions